



DELTA SCIENCE PROGRAM

Independent Scientific Review and Independent Science Synthesis Workshops *A Guide*

Why does the Delta Science Program conduct independent scientific reviews and synthesis workshops ?

The mission of the Delta Science Program is to “provide the best possible unbiased scientific information to inform water and environmental decision-making in the Delta.” Both independent scientific reviews (scientific reviews) and independent synthesis workshops (synthesis workshops) provide information that achieves this goal.

Who can request a review or synthesis workshop?

Any agency or interested party; however, there are several factors the Delta Science Program will consider when determining whether to accept a request. Please see below for more information.

Are the reviews and workshops public?

Yes. Part of the Delta Science Program’s mission is to conduct open and transparent efforts to the extent practicable. Thus, reviews, unless in a letter review format, will include a public meeting and the synthesis workshops will also be accessible to the public. Products and materials used in all these efforts are posted publically on the Delta Science Program’s website.

Overview of Scientific Reviews

What is the purpose of a scientific review?

A scientific review is conducted to provide rigorous, transparent, and objective feedback from experts in the subject area on the scientific integrity and credibility of a process, project, plan, or product. Providing high caliber, up to date, peer review increases the credibility of scientific information, helps scientists improve the quality of their work, and builds trust in decision-making processes.

How does the Delta Science Program decide to accept a request to conduct a scientific review?

The Delta Science Program considers the following factors when making a decision to coordinate an independent scientific review, although the ultimate decision to conduct a scientific review rests with the Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program:

- The relevance of the review purpose to the goals and objectives to the Delta Science Program
- If there is sufficient staff capacity to coordinate a workshop
- If there is sufficient funding available
- If there is sufficient time available to complete the workshop and deliver a report

Overview of Synthesis Workshops

What is the purpose of a synthesis workshop?

A synthesis workshop is conducted to distill the state of knowledge on specific scientific topics during a short period of time (6 months to a year). The synthesized information can be used to:

- Address critical issues identified by decision-makers
- Inform policy and management decisions through joint exploration of “what if” questions and evaluate alternative futures
- Regularly update and communicate the state of scientific knowledge about the Delta system
- Assess the state of scientific knowledge that reflects the dynamic nature of the Delta-system, advances in technologies, and the rapidly growing knowledge base

How does the Delta Science Program decide to accept a request to conduct a synthesis workshop?

The Delta Science Program considers the following factors when making a decision to coordinate a synthesis workshop, although the ultimate decision to conduct a synthesis workshop rests with the Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program:

Overview of Independent Scientific Reviews (cont.)

How does the Delta Science Program decide to accept a request to conduct a scientific review?

- If the document or set of documents provided are complete and ready for review

What is the typical format of a scientific review?

Scientific reviews can be set up in several ways depending on complexity, level of scientific uncertainty, importance of the subject, and available funding. An average review process typically lasts three to five months. The Delta Science Program typically convenes scientific reviews in three ways, listed below, although the Delta Science Program Lead Scientist will determine the ultimate approach:

- Public panel meeting review: A panel of independent scientific experts is provided a set of materials to review, meets publically and receives presentations on materials, and publically present initial recommendations after deliberating in private
- Panel letter review: A panel of independent scientific experts collectively review a set of materials and deliberate at their own discretion. No public meetings are coordinated by the Delta Science Program.
- Individual letter review: Multiple independent scientific experts individually review a set of materials.

What are the products of a scientific review?

Depending on the format of the review, the products differ slightly.

- Public panel review: Public presentation of co-authored initial findings and a co-authored report
- Panel letter review: A co-authored panel report
- Individual letter review: Multiple individual independent scientific peer review reports or memos

Overview of Independent Synthesis Workshops (cont.)

How does the Delta Science Program decide to accept a request to conduct an independent synthesis workshop?

- The relevance of the workshop purpose to the goals and objectives to the Delta Science Program
- If there is sufficient staff capacity to coordinate a workshop
- If there is sufficient funding available
- If there is sufficient time available to complete the workshop and deliver a report
- If document or set of documents provided are complete and ready for review

What is the typical format of a synthesis workshop?

Workshops typically include an independent scientific panel. The panel as a whole is expected to have a broad range of expertise on the workshop topic including familiarity with the geographic region, physical processes, policy issues, ecosystems, and species specific aspects.

Each independent scientific workshop will have a public (in-person and webcast) meeting where presentations will be provided on recent and ongoing scientific research, synthesis efforts by local experts, and scientifically-based expert opinion.

What are the products of a synthesis workshop?

A typical product is a review co-authored by the independent expert panel or proceedings from the workshop.